

# Capt. Aboona Takes Helm of NMRTC Bethesda in Historic Ceremony

U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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On April 9, 2021, at a ceremony held at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNNMC), Capt. Steve T. Aboona, MSC, USN, took the helm of Naval Medical Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bethesda, Md.

Presided over by RDML Darin Via, Commander, Naval Medical Forces Atlantic, the ceremony was the first change of command in the history of NMRTC Bethesda.



Aboona succeeded Capt. Gerard “Jay” Woelkers, an NMRTC plankowner who served in command since May 2019. The ceremony marked the end of his illustrious 39 year career in the Navy, which included 10 years as a hospital corpsman, command of Naval Hospital Cherry Point and two separate combat tours in support of Global Contingency Operations (executive officer of Charlie Trauma Surgical Company, Al Asad, Iraq and commanding officer, Bravo Trauma Surgical Company, Delaram, Afghanistan.)

Admiral Via commended Woelkers on his leadership during one of the most complex times in the history of Navy Medicine and included the deployment of naval personnel across the country in the fight against COVID-19.

“As you sent those naval teams out you expertly balanced the flow of information and taskers that constantly came at you, but most importantly you focused on the staff, maintained morale and made sure the job got done,” said Via.

Turning to Aboona, Via acknowledged his unique role as the former commanding officer and executive officer of the Naval Medical Logistics Command (NMLC) stating: “Everything that we needed in the war on COVID from the medical supplies and logistics. . .you always answered the call. You have a record of excellence and I am confident that you will lead NMRTC through the COVID-19 pandemic and arise to any challenges during your time here.”

As NMLC commanding officer since March 2019, Aboona oversaw and managed over \$1 billion in global medical logistics and acquisitions in support of the Navy’s medical readiness mission.

A native of Rockford Mich., Aboona was commissioned in May 2000. His early experiences included service as department head of materiel management at Naval Hospital Cherry Point, the logistics and contracting officer at Naval Hospital Rota, Spain, assistant supply officer aboard USNS Mercy (T-AH-19), and Naval Medical Center San Diego where he was responsible for execution of over \$300 million in support of renovations and numerous patient-centered care initiatives.

Following a tour at the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Aboona reported to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) where he served as the executive assistant to the Mr. Joe Marshall, Navy Medicine Comptroller, before becoming department chief of logistics at WRNNMC.

In his remarks, Capt. Aboona recognized Marshall who was in attendance.

“You have been an inspirational mentor and have trained so many of us in executive medicine today on how to be sound professionals at our commands, and uphold the Navy core values,” said Aboona. “It is simply impossible for

me to count all the ways you have helped me in my career and I will always be grateful to you and Mrs. Marshall for your support and kindness.”

Aboona also thanked Admirals Via and Anne Swap, Director, National Capital Medical Directorate, and Col. Andrew Barr, Director, WRNMMC, for their leadership and support, and his wife Maria who he credited as his “source of strength” and “moral compass.”

NMRTC Bethesda was established in May 2019 to provide personnel and deployment services to active duty Navy personnel assigned to WRNMMC and the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. As its new commanding officer, Capt. Aboona is responsible for overseeing and executing its mission to provide “quality service to all sailors, [while] ensuring maximum readiness.”

Capt. Aboona noted that he looks forward to this challenge and building on the achievements of Capt. Woelkers, remarking: “As BUMED refocuses and strengthens its support of operational readiness for our sailors and Marines at home and abroad I look forward to building on the strong foundations that have already been built in supporting the Navy Surgeon General’s goals and Naval Medical Forces Atlantic’s mission.”